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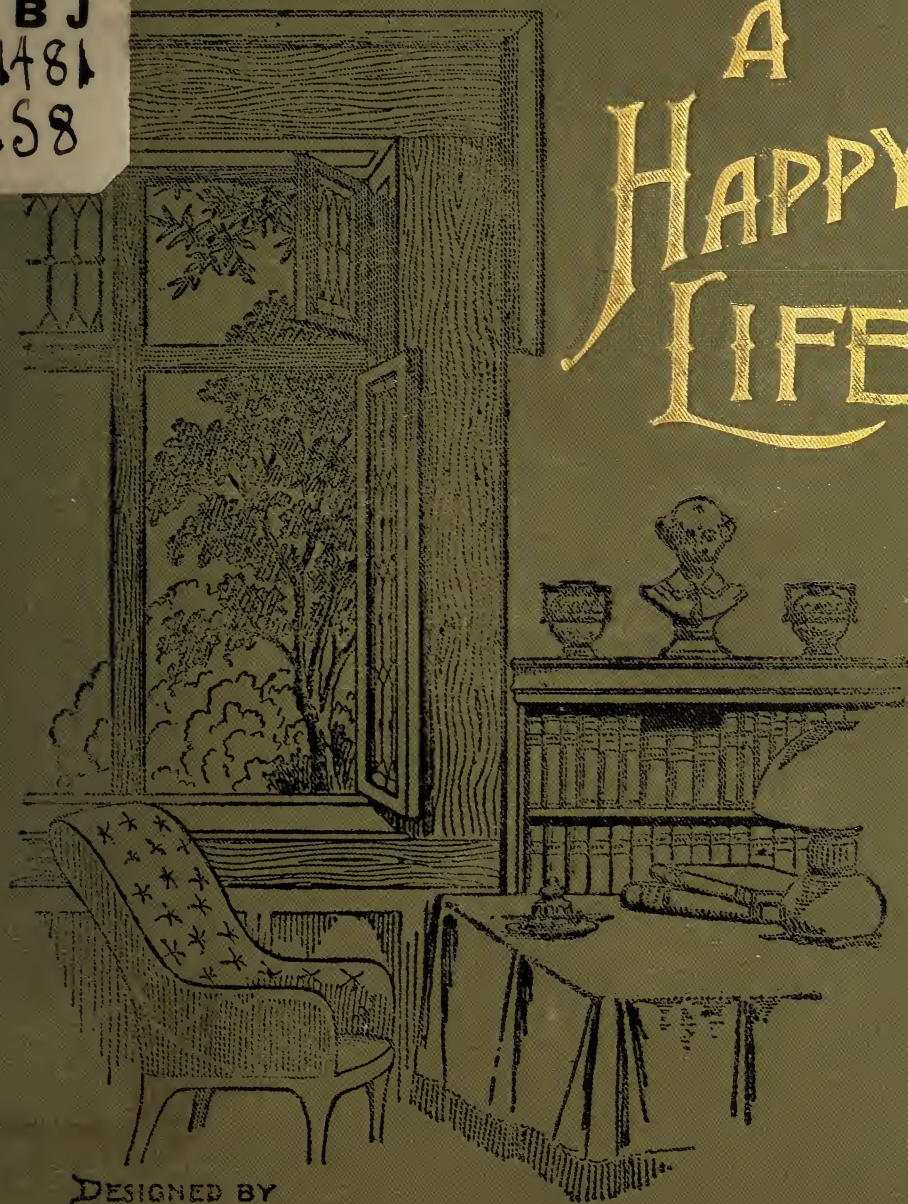
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A HAPPY LIFE



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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A HAPPY LIFE

BY
MARY DAVIES STEELE

"Expectant, grateful, and serenely acquiescent"

DAYTON, OHIO
UNITED BRETHREN PUBLISHING HOUSE
1895



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TO THE MEMORY
OF
Robert W. Steele,
BELOVED FATHER, WISEST TEACHER, AND CLOSEST
FRIEND,
THIS ESSAY IS GRATEFULLY AND
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

A HAPPY LIFE.

“LAUGH if you are wise; be contented if it kills you,” is the advice of both an ancient philosopher and a modern author. Gaiety of heart, smiling cheerfulness, a keen sense of the ridiculous, combined with the ability to take good-naturedly a joke on one's self, — things which do not always go together, — are priceless possessions.

A woman who was as sunny-tempered as she was absent-minded and eccentric used to say she was glad her peculiarities afforded people so much

amusement, and that, though not witty herself, she was the occasion of wit in others. She never hesitated to make fun of herself, and was the first to call attention to her blunders. When she did or said some absurd thing, she hastened to give a droll report of it, joining heartily in the laugh which followed. She was a rich mine of humorous material to a locally-noted *raconteur*, always on the watch to add to his large collection of anecdotes. By the course she pursued she often blunted his weapons, extracting the sting from many a joke, and taking the edge off numerous good stories told at her expense.

Lack of beauty of face or fig-

ure is sometimes a cause of real misery. "Dare to be ugly" is the injunction of an old writer to homely people. Some persons are so ugly that they are good-looking—partly, perhaps, through originality. But these are usually the kind of homely people who face the world with a frank smile and serene temper, instead of yielding to a shrinking sensitiveness which presently degenerates into sulky suspicion of all about them.

An eye twinkling with humor, and an intelligent, benevolent, and good-natured expression often render very attractive a person devoid of beauty of form, feature, or complexion. We have known deformed peo-

ple so full of faith, courage, trustfulness, and friendliness, so interested in life and sure that health and beauty are at the heart of things, that they were perfectly happy, and their disabilities seemed never present to their minds. This was not simply the result of the law that enables us to become used to and tolerant of almost anything, but the victory of a beautiful, strong, serene spirit over a body that did it grievous wrong.

The *Spectator* says that "while it is barbarous for others to rally a man for natural defects of body, it is extremely agreeable when he can himself jest and make merry at his imperfections. When he can possess

himself with such cheerfulness, women and children who are at first frightened at him will afterwards be as much pleased with him." This is stoical resignation indeed. Jokes at one's own expense, under these gruesome circumstances, when deformed, twisted, and awry, for instance, like Scarron, could certainly not fail to have a bitter tang. Groans would be less painful to listen to than such sardonic merriment.

Reasonable and innocent wit and humor are great sweeteners of social intercourse. It is doubtful whether Sidney Smith's suggestion by way of contrast that, if nothing better offered, man could have directed his

ways by plain reason and supported his life by tasteless food, is true. It is probable rather that the human race would soon have withered away and disappeared from the face of the earth if God had not given us "wit, and flavor, and perfume, and laughter to brighten the days of man's pilgrimage, and to 'charm his pained footsteps over the burning marl.'"

As love is one of the ingredients of humor, humor promotes tolerant and humane views of life. The man who has this softening and lubricating gift helps to make the wheels of existence run smoother. His jests, also, like a brisk wind clearing a cloudy atmosphere, have brought

many a petty quarrel that was brewing to a merry end, enabling tense, excited, over-strained feelings to find vent in a healing peal of laughter, when just ready to relieve themselves in a burst of tears or a gust of passionate words that would have left a lasting wound behind them.

Robust health, insuring perfection of the senses and of physical strength, causes enjoyment, which, though not the real thing, is a deceptive imitation of happiness. To people accustomed to regard the day-laborer's lot as hard and joyless it is a delightful surprise to watch a jolly company of stalwart colored street-pavers gaily

toiling as though the work were a pleasure, through broiling July days, leveling ground and spreading boiling pitch—shouting, joking, and laughing by the hour, frequently bursting out melodiously into “Yo-ho, lemonade!” or some other lively nonsense song, keeping time with great shovelfuls of broken stone tossed from their barrows with a continuous rapidity which they who never saw it would deem impossible to human muscles.

A country walk, if we have health and strength, is a most exhilarating pleasure. If the pedestrian adds to delight in vigorous exercise and appreciation of scenery a fondness for natural

history and botany, and goes forth equipped with opera-glass and microscope, science will display to him many wonders beneath and in addition to the charming things seen by eyes brightened by taste and imagination. What flocks of tuneful birds and myriads of fair flowers he enjoys where the less instructed see only occasional songsters and infrequent blossoms! What rich variety, brilliancy, and peculiarities of color, form, motion, tones, and odors reveal themselves to his careful and loving observation! And then consider the wealth of thought, beauty, and emotion memory is indelibly impressing upon the imagination and lay-

ing up for the consolation of
“vacant or pensive moods.”

How often does there

“Flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude”

the recollection of a drive down the main street of a New England village on a sweet summer evening, with Monadnock, rosy from base to summit, like a great pink cloud low on the horizon, in full view. Then there is the memory of a walk up a railroad on a crisp, sunny autumn day, the embankment on either side blue as far as the eye could see with heaven's own blue of the fringed gentian—myriads of cerulean flowers “fluttering and dancing in the breeze.” Or one recalls going in early spring through

an evergreen wood and brushing aside the odorous pine needles to inhale the fragrance and feast one's eyes on the pink and white flowers and dark green leaves of the trailing arbutus — great masses of it.

A later picture is a sunset after a storm on a boundless Western prairie, with neither mountain, nor tree, nor house to limit the outlook. Ruskin's "Modern Painters" was being read for the first time with youthful faith, curiosity, and enthusiasm at fever heat — the artist's theories and moralizings illustrated, if one looked up from the book, by all the sky tints and all the species of clouds, while the feet pressed delicate

grasses and exquisite flowers of varied hue, and the moist air, delicious with faint odors, fanned the cheek. Suddenly, two perfect, clearly defined rainbows, with a broad band of faint blue between, spanned the heavens. As this faultless double bow faded away, the eye sank enraptured into the soft depths of piled-up clouds of every shape and size. A sunset of indescribable magnificence filled the sky, which became a surging sea of color, from the richest and deepest to the most vivid and radiant or delicate shades,—purple and gold and crimson and white and blue and pink and aqua marine. One of two friends who stood overwhelmed by this splendor,

could only murmur: "I never before saw so much of the sky; I never before saw the *whole* of *one* rainbow. I shall never forget this evening."

And how often did that grandeur flash upon the inward eye, followed by similar glimpses of the beauty of nature, none sweeter than the glorified childish recollection of another wide prairie, full of pungent, bitter-almond-scented wild plum trees loaded with snow-white blossoms, the sun of a long, long-ago May day shining down on them from a clear blue sky.

When out-of-town rambles cannot be indulged in, the next best thing is to read Thoreau. He

brings the balmy air of May and the perfume of wild crab-apple blossoms, the brilliant light and splendid bloom of summer, the glory of autumn leaves, the scent of ripe apples piled up in orchards, the purple of asters and the gold of mysterious, frost-loving witch-hazel, the invigorating atmosphere, the pure diamond radiance of snow and ice, and the surprising animal and plant life of mid-winter into our city room.

Probably there are few kinds of felicity surpassing that flowing from the love of books. When the enthusiastic reader speaks with a sort of rapture of the close companionship and un-

ending friendship of books, the element of an almost human personality is so evident to him, and the contact of his mind with these other minds so genuine that he is not conscious of extravagance or exaggeration. He turns with ardor from the business or anxieties of life to these unfailing advisers and comforters—philosophers, wits, historians, men of action or of contemplation—and, absorbed in the record of their thoughts, feelings, and conduct, forgets for a while weariness, pain, and care, or learns to transmute them into strength, peace, and joy.

Sometimes, by means of the “consolations of letters and phi-

losophy," people who might be described as involuntary hermits have found life tolerable, or even well worth living. The secluded, far Western ranchman, passing his days in the presence of the sublimest natural scenery, and with little association with any but the best society, — poets, essayists, scientists, and the heroes and heroines of history and biography, — will go back to the city a more cultivated man than when he plunged into the wilderness. Recluses do not always fall out of line and become warped, eccentric, and hard to live with; dwellers in cities, like Carlyle, sometimes do. The herb happiness is a spiritual growth and, therefore,

is occasionally sprinkled over the most arid deserts.

Numerous instances might be cited from history or biography of persons forced to live long in seclusion, and even in humiliation and suffering, though so many were their spiritual companions that their condition might after all best be described as social solitude with many compensations and consolations. Such persons returning to the world or appearing in it for the first time, longing for an active share in philanthropy, business, literature, or society, have, to the surprise of all, found themselves really in touch with their fellow-creatures. Though almost like strangers from an-

other planet, to whom everything is new and fresh, and human nature a matter of eager interest and curiosity, the enforced leisure and turning in upon themselves, the reading, meditating, and theorizing of years on history and current events, had endowed them with a fund of practical knowledge and a power of reasoning and unprejudiced weighing of questions which could be made available in action. If they accomplished anything valuable, they knew it to be the result of a gift of entering, by imagination developed by the impossibility of actual contact, into things outside their own natures and beyond the bounds of personal

circumstances and environment. And this sympathy and comprehension was the effect of a discipline of retirement, pain and disappointment, and apparent defeat. In varying degrees and different forms such has been the mental and moral history of not a few characters. Luther was for years a monk. Our Saviour worked at his carpenter's bench till he was thirty.

“The man who, though his fights be all
defeats,
Still fights, has verily seen the begin-
ning of peace.”

A firm faith in God and a certainty of immortality, a habit of regarding our present phase of existence as the mere dawn of an

endless life, make many things endurable that would otherwise fill us with despair. As far, even, as this world is concerned, it is, after all, only hope and the love of the impossible — that is, of ideals which we strive after but can never realize — that constitute happiness.

We rejoice in effort and the anticipation of attainment, and while our object moves as we progress, and is ever just far enough ahead to lure us on, our store of blessedness is really richer with every failure to grasp it and with each apparent disappointment. It is, therefore, in truth, merely imaginary and future enjoyment that we possess in perfection. When we

get what we long for it never exactly answers our expectations; our felicity is less than we supposed it would be.

But then there is the consolation of reflecting, as the *Spectator* says, that the hope of gaining a certain thing "has brightened many a year of life, enabled us to toil for its attainment with vigor and alacrity, to discharge with honor our part in society,—in short, has given us in reality as substantial happiness as human nature is capable of enjoying." W. H. Myers dwells on the thought that the fact may be that "man is not constructed for flawless happiness, but for moral evolution." Progress is the aim; joy,

if it comes, is incidental and by the way.

“Oh, righteous doom, that they who make
Pleasure their only end,
Ordering the whole life for its sake,
Miss that whereto they tend.

“But they who bid stern Duty lead,
Content to follow, they
Of Duty only taking heed,
Find pleasure by the way.”

To many another besides the fragile Duke of Albany this passage by Myers might be applied: “His brief career was a progressive self-adjustment to the conditions of his lot, a growing acceptance of duty, and not caprice or pleasure, as the guide of life. So far as he achieved this, he attained happiness, and so far as sickness and suffering helped him to achieve it, they

were the blessings of his life. The prince had learned at the gates of death a sense of the reality of the Unseen which many theologians might envy. He could scarcely understand the difficulty of other minds in attaining to a certainty like his own."

There are people of such fortitude, of such radiance of soul, that the sharpest pain and life-long invalidism cannot make them permanently sad and miserable. Frequent glints of light from heaven pierce their darkest clouds. The same temper, Christly in character and origin, sometimes enables a really heart-broken man or woman, after the one loved best has been taken, to

face the duties of life bravely. Things of the soul and things of the mind are certainties to them. They have gone down into the depths of pain and bereavement till they have reached the immutable—the Rock of Ages.

The sting of anxiety, poverty, pain, and grief is too sharp and triumphant to be charmed away by any rose-water theory of the victory of gladness over misery. The wounded heart aches and aches, and joy and peace, unattainable and unsought, do not descend with healing in their wings. But let us do right, though the heavens fall! In this dire stress of soul the grim determination to hold fast to faith

and duty is all that remains or is possible. It is the sin that underlies or mingles with our trials—as when those, for instance, who are dearly loved succumb to temptation—that is their principal root of bitterness, and often makes life, as far as this world at least is concerned, a seemingly hopeless tragedy.

Grief is sometimes desecrated by a tumult of strife, and greed, and misunderstanding, which renders the soul deaf to consolation. If evil does not undo its assigned work, grief may be, in spite of an aching void and ever-present loneliness, a holy state in which the assurance of endless continuity of life and a directness of communion with the

divine source of spiritual regeneration, not usual in less morally shut-in conditions, rout despair and motiveless self-absorption. An evil source or disposition turns the wholesome tonic of poverty or pain into a deadly poison.

"I am sure," says Phillips Brooks, "we all know the fine, calm, sober humbleness of men who have really tried themselves against the great tasks of life. It is something that never comes into the character, never shows in the face, of a man who has never worked." The noblest people, those who have led the most beautiful, the most useful, and the happiest lives, or been successful in a material sense, have rarely been reared in wealth,

luxury, and idleness; but they have been disciplined in a sterner school of labor, self-denial, and, perhaps, even of want, and bare of consolation, grace, and recreation, save that derived from imaginative, intellectual, and spiritual sources. Leisure and wealth have their pure and legitimate pleasures and advantages of travel, tasteful dress and surroundings, collections of books and works of art, and a culture, polish, and suavity not as easily attainable in other environments, and which, as, whatever his wishes, no man can live wholly to himself, add perceptibly to the common stock of human happiness and progress.

A life of active philanthropy in organized avenues is so morally satisfying that it might be defined as a happy life. But how trying are the wearisome gossip and dissensions of the committee meeting, the disappointments in the character of both associates and beneficiaries, the mistakes and lack of success in the most promising directions! Guided, however, by the motto, "Patience, continuance, and sober enthusiasm," results follow that bless the world and fill the heart of the philanthropist with peace and serenity.

The modern notion of happiness has probably more elements of excitement than of

quiet. Its ideal would perhaps be represented by a notable housekeeper, wife, mother, philanthropist, and lover of good books, dead some time since at an advanced age, who, when friends bemoaned unfulfilled purposes, used to assert with an air of great satisfaction that she was so happy as always to accomplish, before she slept, the day's work planned in the morning; she did it if she had to sit up all night to get through!

"I hope you are taking life easy this vacation, idly enjoying every moment," a friend said one brilliant summer morning to an ambitious and successful young woman who, when released from the arduous duties

of her profession, found recreation in change of occupation, and in art, study, and music.

"Oh, I am catching up," was the energetic reply, in a tone that somehow suggested the tonic crispness, yet sunny warmth, of the atmosphere of "Walden" and the "Excursions." "I am doing odd jobs; busy at home and elsewhere every instant."

"Oh, rest, rest; do rest," begged her friend. "Rest is a delightful word to me."

"Yes, I know. It is lovely, but then there are so many nicer things," she answered.

So many nicer things than rest! That was the spirit of the age compressed into a nutshell. It is unnecessary and unwise at

present to reiterate the old proverb, "Better wear out than rust out," yet for most of us the secret of cheerfulness lies in exertion.

There are men and women who leave no margin for culture, rest, and recreation in their scheme of life. Necessary indulgences of the mind and flesh are submitted to under protest. Money-making, or labor with the hands, business, housekeeping, or sewing can alone secure the approval of their consciences. In the *Rambler* may be found an amusing caricature of a woman of this kind—Lady Bustle, a country gentlewoman. My Lady Bustle daily

got her daughters and maids up at dawn, and worked with them from sunrise till dusk in the kitchen, pantry, still-house, and linen closet, and was perfectly happy and self-satisfied personally, whatever may have been the feelings of her young assistants.

It was "the great business of her life to watch the skillet on the fire, and to see it simmer with the due degree of heat, and to snatch it off at the moment of projection; and the employments to which she has bred her daughters are to turn rose-leaves in the shade, to pick out the seeds of currants with a quill, to gather fruit without bruising it, and to extract beauty

flower water for the skin." Busy all day, and tired out at night, the young ladies of the family could not do much for the entertainment of an intelligent city girl who was visiting them. Thrown on her own resources for amusement, she tried to find a readable book, but could discover nothing less practical than "The Lady's Chest Opened," "The Complete Servant Maid," and the "Court Cook Book." Lady Bustle took occasion to condemn her guest's literary tastes. "She soon told me," the latter writes to the *Rambler*, "that none of her books would suit me; for her part, she never loved to see young women give their minds to such follies, by which they

would only learn to use hard words; she bred up her daughters to understand a house, and whoever should marry them, if they knew anything of good cookery, would never repent it." The kitchen she regarded as the heart of the home.

A noted woman past middle age was recalling the events of her busy life, and she said, earnestly and regretfully: "I long to spend the rest of my days in some quiet retreat, surrounded by relatives, books, and congenial friends, and devote myself to purely literary work, requiring culture, thought, and careful revision and polish, yet in a leisurely way that would afford time for domestic and social en-

joyment. I feel that I have never had an opportunity to do the best that is in me to do. I have had numerous domestic and public claims upon my purse that required me to undertake writing that would pay; my children needed so many things, and I have had constant appeals outside my home to which heart and conscience refused denial. My position put me in the way of these demands for financial aid. I have met with reverses and disappointments. But," she continued, with an air of enjoying or of having become hardened to labor and turmoil, "we must help others, or try to. We cannot shut our eyes and fold our

hands, but must just work on to the end. I am so weary; but we are all that; we have to be." People in bereavement sometimes fall into a self-indulgent state described as the luxury of grief. There is so much talk nowadays about overwork that one wonders sometimes if a certain class, perhaps because the complaint that one has undertaken so much that one is always tired is considered creditable rather than the reverse, is not indulging in what might be called the luxury of fatigue, and engaging in unnecessary labor.

There is a very different class, thoroughly earnest and sincere, who have little mercy on the flesh, and whose spirits seem

united by the slightest filaments to the body. If such active people tried to accept as their rule of life the motto, "Be easy," an old essayist's secret of a happy career, how uneasy they would be!

After all, when we beg overworked friends whose souls are severe taskmasters, not to consume the candle at both ends, but to spread their useful lives over a long period of calm and leisurely years instead of burning out in a flame of love and enthusiasm before middle age, are we not thinking of our own happiness rather than of theirs? We want to keep their strength and faith and hope and joy for our own sustenance and delectation till our last day, not to see it gener-

ously lavished in one short burst of passionate self-sacrifice on humanity as a whole.

But in such glowing self-forgetfulness is that settled, underlying quiet of the mind that characterizes elect spirits. This is the secret of their cheerful serenity, still enthusiasm, and sanguine and almost seerlike hope—a faith in the future that sees and greets and embraces afar off the perfected ideal man and woman. From the very moment of the inception of a society or institution they have the comfort of seeing its history in the lines of the broadest and most satisfactory progress spread before them, no detail lacking. They are so sure of ultimate suc-

cess that their patience, good nature, charity, and magnanimity are boundless. They can afford to wait. There is, to quote Addison, "something friendly in their behaviour that conciliates men's minds." Their enthusiasm is contagious. Helping hands and pecuniary assistance for their labors of love come to them just at the time of greatest stress. Quietness and repose characterize them. Their own joy is the cause of joy in others. We are reminded when with them of that sentence of the *Spectator*, "In the first ages of the world men shined by a noble simplicity of behaviour." Such characters are less rare than we sometimes believe.

No enjoyment surpasses that derived from the creative exercise of the reasoning and imaginative faculties. People who are absorbed in art, music, literature, science, discoveries, or inventions, are often while at work lifted far above the deprivations and anxieties about practical affairs which usually fall to the lot of those engaged in pursuits which are not, as a rule, valued at a high rate financially. Sometimes, to be sure, when the purse and the flour barrel are empty and reputation eludes their grasp, they descend into measureless depths of gloom, but the artistic or scientific temperament enables them to spend most of their days in bliss.

The noble literary artist, Valdes, says truthfully: "It is inherent in our nature that we should wish our powers to succeed, that is, show an external result; but the true artist does not cease to work if he fails to obtain it, because what he loves above all is his own activity. This is what gives the liveliest and purest delight. Therefore, the most humble artist may be as happy as the greatest."

The man or woman of supposedly ideal aims is sometimes as world-battered and burnt out with passion, sensationalism, and feverish excitement as the devotee of fashion and amusement, or the operator on the

Wall Street stock exchange. In this age of hurry-scurry and bustle and of unceasing scramble, not only for wealth, power, and pleasure, but we might almost say for piety and learning; when benevolence is often a dissipation, and an author's quest for fame a species of gambling, there is something soothing to the mind wearied and unsettled by the prevailing lack of quiet and rest, in turning to descriptions in once popular essays and biographies of old-fashioned theories of happiness.

The eighteenth century essayists loved to eulogize men who could be tranquil and happy this side of the grave in spite of all the Latin and Greek scraps

to the contrary. They extolled a voluntary and cheerful quiet and seclusion and expatiated on the delights of lettered ease, learning pursued for learning's sake, cottages in walled-in gardens, or strolls in shady, out-of-the-way London nooks, far from the haunts of trade and dissipation. Their ideal was an equanimity and regularity of spirit which was a little above cheerfulness and below mirth. "Indolence of body and mind," the *Spectator* says, "when we aim at no more, is very frequently enjoyed, but the very inquiry after happiness has something restless in it which a man who lives in a series of temperate meals, friendly conversations, and easy

slumbers gives himself no trouble about. While men of refinement are talking of tranquillity, he possesses it."

There are delicious pictures in the British classics of sweet domestic retirement, in which books, a garden, a simple though sufficient table, and the companionship of husband, wife, and children, rendering all luxuries, change of scene, or additional society unnecessary, make other forms of existence seem almost worthless. There is no more exquisite description in literature of plain living and high thinking than the account in the sixteenth essay of the "World" of the rector of South Green

and his honest wife, who, after a youth of literary and social prominence at the university and in London, had settled down contentedly for life in an out-of-the-way country parish.

"You know," the essayist says, "with what compassion we used to think of them; that a man who had mixed a good deal with the world, and who had always entertained hopes of making a figure in it, should foolishly and at an age when people generally grow wise, throw away his affections upon a girl worth nothing; and that she, one of the liveliest of women, as well as the finest, should refuse the most advantageous offers which were made her, and follow a poor

parson to his living of fifty pounds a year in a remote corner of the kingdom. But I have learned from experience that we have been pitying the happiest of our acquaintance. . . . Their favorite amusement is reading; now and then, indeed, our friend scribbles a little, but his performances reach no farther than a short sermon or paper of verses in praise of his wife. Every birthday of the lady is constantly celebrated in this manner; and though you do not read a Swift to his Stella, yet there is something so sincere and tender in these little pieces that I could never read any of them without tears. In the fine afternoons and evenings they are walking

arm in arm with their boy and girl about their ground, but how cheerful, how happy, is not to be told you. Their children (the prettiest little things that ever were) are hardly so much children as themselves."

A woman is never happier than when engaged in home-making—housekeeping, sewing, making things comfortable and pleasant for husband and children, and so occupied with her family that she cannot become self-centered. The heart at leisure from itself is the happy heart—"expectant, grateful, and serenely acquiescent." Environment can destroy happiness, but it cannot create it. It is what we put into life, not what

we find there through inheritance or fortunate circumstances, that insures peace and satisfaction. The *Guardian* gives a pleasant sketch of an incident in old-time English country life, which is an illustration of the truth that contentment and an interest in the higher things of life are as truly the secret of happiness in a well-to-do country gentleman's family as in a poor parson's rectory.

"The excellent lady, the Lady Lizard," says the *Guardian*, "in the space of one summer furnished a gallery with chairs and couches of her own and her daughters' working, and at the same time heard all 'De Tillotson's Sermons' twice over. It

is always the custom for one of the young ladies to read while the others work; so that the learning of the family is not at all prejudicial to its manufactures. I was mightily pleased the other day to find them all busy in preserving several fruits of the season, with the Sparkler (Miss Lizard) in the midst of them reading over the 'Plurality of Worlds.' It was entertaining to me to see them dividing their speculations between the jellies and stars, and making a sudden transition from the sun to an apricot or from the Copernican system to the figure of a cheese cake." The innocent domestic and social gossip of Lady Lizard's tea-table was varied some-

times by intelligent discussion of a new play or book. And Mary Lizard, whose pet name, the "Sparkler," was very appropriate for a girl who was "the quintessence of good nature and generosity," and bubbling over with fun and laughter, and her sister Cornelia, who had the air of a student, did not confine their reading to divinity and astronomy, but were often found curled up in the parlor window-seat or hidden away in their chambers, rapturously devouring a poem or romance; and the "Sparkler," once in her life at least, wrote a bright little critical letter to the *Guardian* on Addison's famous play of Cato.

Men and women thoroughly united in heart and mind, rejoicing in their own present and living also in the future of their children, cannot always understand the restlessness which renders women having no such ties impatient to forsake the quiet seclusion, comprehension, and affectionate consideration of the domestic circle for the bustling activities of the cold, unfriendly, outer world. But an aimless, inane existence, with an outlook on years becoming more and more humdrum and unprogressive and useless to others as the months pass, is not conducive to contentment. They seem to be superfluous beings. This is partly the secret of the

attraction—though there are less selfish reasons—that superior characters often feel in college settlements, professional and philanthropic employments, or more self-centered occupations, which, as they are permanent and salaried and no favor is shown, are free from the taint of amateurishness.

Individuals should certainly develop in the line of their tastes and aptitudes, fulfilling their inborn personality. This course, though sometimes at first seeming to conflict with the peace of others, is usually in the end best for all concerned. There is an exaggerated self-sacrifice which has nothing to recommend it and which might

almost be described as moral suicide. Yet there may be cases where there is more discipline for happiness, if that were all involved, in submitting for love's sake to an apparently idle and useless life, than in going forth to find the career for which one seems destined—departing in search of fame or fortune, or even to serve poor, sick, and grief-laden strangers. As a rule, He “setteth the solitary in families,” that they may bless and be blessed. Phillips Brooks called happiness the flower of duty.

But Providence does not limit the possibilities of happiness. The nineteenth century has so greatly increased the interests

and enjoyments of women and enlarged their opportunities of culture, remunerative occupation, and disinterested labors for their fellow-creatures, that it is difficult to imagine a more delightful lot than that of a sensible, cultivated, energetic, conscientious, warm-hearted, unmarried woman, with all her faculties in working order and under perfect control, and with the power to plan and carry out successfully to the end the kind of existence that is most congenial and morally satisfactory to her. She will not suffer from the lack of people to love and serve.

There are a few people who

might be called natural joy-bearers, though they do nothing that is large enough to be known outside of their own town or neighborhood. They seem to have been born with hearts overflowing with generous impulses. Their kindness has the air of being spontaneous and not merely the result of a sense of duty. They have a genius for doing kind little acts in the most matter-of-course way and with a delicacy and simplicity which render receiving from them pleasurable instead of burdensome. They are on the watch for opportunities to encourage, cheer, express appreciation, and pay grateful little attentions. They realize so fully the bless-

edness of giving, that it would seem to them almost selfish not to allow others to share this happiness. So when they plan some pleasant or helpful surprise, they do not, as a rule, carry it out alone, but gladly, if possible, divide the enjoyment the friendly deed affords them. Good nature, truth, discretion, sincerity, equability, evenness of disposition, and pleasantness of temper—all, according to the old moralists, prime elements of happiness—are not found in the morose and suspicious person who is the victim of *ennui*, or, as Queen Anne's people would have said, of spleen.

Pleasing our neighbor for his

good to edification is one of the duties inculcated in the New Testament, and partly means, perhaps, keeping him good-humored and contented and pleased with himself, thus removing excuses for irritation, fretfulness, and grumbling. Tact is a requisite of this gift of pleasing. Amiel says, "Kindness is the principle of tact and respect for others; the first condition of *savoir vivre*."

The nice perception of the tastes, moods, and whims of others, the ready power of doing what is required by circumstances, of pouring oil on wounded sensibilities, of bringing peace out of discord, of gliding lightly over dangerous places, of quickly

and adroitly changing conversation which has taken an unfortunate direction, of smiling when the head and heart ache, of managing others for their own good, are by many men considered special feminine endowments, and a failure to answer expectations in these directions seems to them almost unnatural or unwomanly. The managing woman is the butt of the satirist. Is there a good sense in which the managing woman is a blessing rather than a torment?

“If,” says the *Guardian*, “we could look into the secret anguish and affliction of every man’s heart, we should often find that more of it arises from little imaginary distresses, such

as checks, frowns, contradictions, expressions of contempt, than from the more real pains and calamities of life." The only remedy for these distresses, according to the same writer and his fellow-essayists, is complacency or a constant endeavor to please those we converse with as far as we may do it innocently.

Good manners require that when in company we should look on the bright side of life, and "the best-bred person is of this temper," says an eighteenth century author. There are persons whom nothing suits. With them it is always too cold or too hot; they are more prone to

discern defects than merits in a book or work of art, and have a keen scent for the faults of their friends. Their chief topics of conversation are their own ill health or domestic misfortunes or mishaps. They consider their trials greater than any one else ever had to bear. These self-pitiers demand the sympathy and unwearied attention of unfortunate friends, but will not themselves listen with the slightest patience or interest to the sorrowful confidences of others.

The *Guardian* describes happiness as content and strength of mind; but goes on to say that Varro records two hundred and eighty-eight definitions of this blessed state, and Lucian

an equally long list, and that the latter endeavors to show the absurdity of them all without substituting any opinion of his own. In fact, happiness is a rose snatched from among thorns. The *Spectator* wisely says that people receive more of their happiness at second-hand by rebound from others than by direct and immediate sensation. When men and women go out into the world with this conviction, how much joy awaits them! They do not know from experience the meaning of that detestable little word "bore." If others are happy and pleased and absorbed in their own affairs to such a degree that their interest and satisfaction run over in too great

a stream of words, by entering sympathetically into this effusiveness and judging it from its best and not from its unloveliest or ridiculous point of view, they presently find themselves sharing instead of being wearied by it.

It is a poor philosophy of life to set up some cast-iron standard of motive and character, and to feel no interest in anything that does not conform to it. Nearly every person or thing, however unpromising at first, has some good and agreeable quality if we look out for it and do not expect too much.

The reader with an omnivorous taste for books has all literature to range over and is con-

fined to no restricted field, though he has his favorites and does not love all authors equally well. Perhaps one step towards the increase of happiness would be the cultivation of an omnivorous taste for human nature, which need not preclude discrimination and choice. Even if it were desirable, it is impossible to have more than a few friends. But we may be sufficiently interested in those outside this necessarily contracted circle to listen with sympathy which has no element of insincerity to conversation which carries us into emotional, intellectual, and practical experiences hitherto unknown to us.

The wild flavor of Bohemianism, the confidences of gypsies,

tramps, street Arabs, and dwellers in the teeming slums of large cities has sometimes a picturesque charm for men of decorous lives. They listen with the imagination rather than with the critical and moral faculties at the helm. Taste and creed and culture may protest; it is a common humanity that draws them together. Then follows an impulse to raise these submerged classes to a higher level. Novelists who use for purely artistic purposes material gathered by themselves and others during visits made merely for amusement, or out of curiosity, to tenement-house neighborhoods, gradually create a practical public interest in lowly victims of

circumstances which is not content with sentimentalism or art as an end, but can obtain peace only in an effort to relieve the misery painted with harrowing effect in literature. There are many men and women of the present day who find in such labors their chief happiness.

Every one is apt to converse best on his specialty. There is no more genuine and innocent source of enjoyment than good talk. The scholar, artist, statesman, or man of leisure listens entranced to the clear, vivid, earnest talk of the machinist or mechanic; to his intelligent descriptions of engines and tools; to the graphic accounts which

other salaried or wage-earning people, men and women, give of their labors, trials, and pleasures; to the large plans and accomplishments of manufacturers and merchants. The enjoyment of such chats, their novelty and freshness of view, is reciprocal. The disposition that unites, and not that which divides,—comprehension and a living interest in others,—is a promoter of both happiness and goodness.

There are few greater sources of pleasure than the love of little children, with their angel innocence; their wide-eyed wonder at this strange, beautiful, unknown world; their undoubting trust, hope, and faith; their

certainty of love and welcome, which wins what they take for granted; their gradual unfolding of mind and heart, and growth in grace, knowledge, and character. One part of their charm and restfulness consists in the fact that their feet are not yet wet with the sea of trouble that awaits all earthly pilgrims. With the exception of the children, the people in whom the power of radiating happiness dwells are not those who have been kept from sorrow, want, and pain, but those blessed with a well-disciplined soul. And in the ranks of these comforters of mankind are not only the mature and aged, but some who are "young, but in spirit

not untrained by trouble." Demetrius said that nothing was unhappier than a man that had never known affliction.

We can, if we try hard enough, get nearly as much suffering out of trifles not worth considering as Christian martyrs or heroes of Greek tragedy endured. Trifles have power to rout as well as to bring on the blues. A bird's song, a bunch of violets, a merry-hearted friend's jest or laugh, a glance into a tree in full leaf, or up into the June sky, or down on a garden where the grass is smooth and green and flowers are blooming, has occasionally brought a day that dawned in gloom to a cheerful

close. Amusing reading, innocent gossip, concerts, novels, games, and outdoor exercise are sometimes veritable means of grace, not only warding off fits of ill temper, but making people positively amiable for the time being — a result which may reasonably be set down as a gain on the side of morality.

The *Rambler*, speaking of the old Greeks, says that while their morality, as a whole, is not to be commended, their habit of looking on the bright side and making the best of things is worth imitating. Symonds describes them as keenly feeling disaster, disease, and all the ills that flesh is heir to, but with souls strong

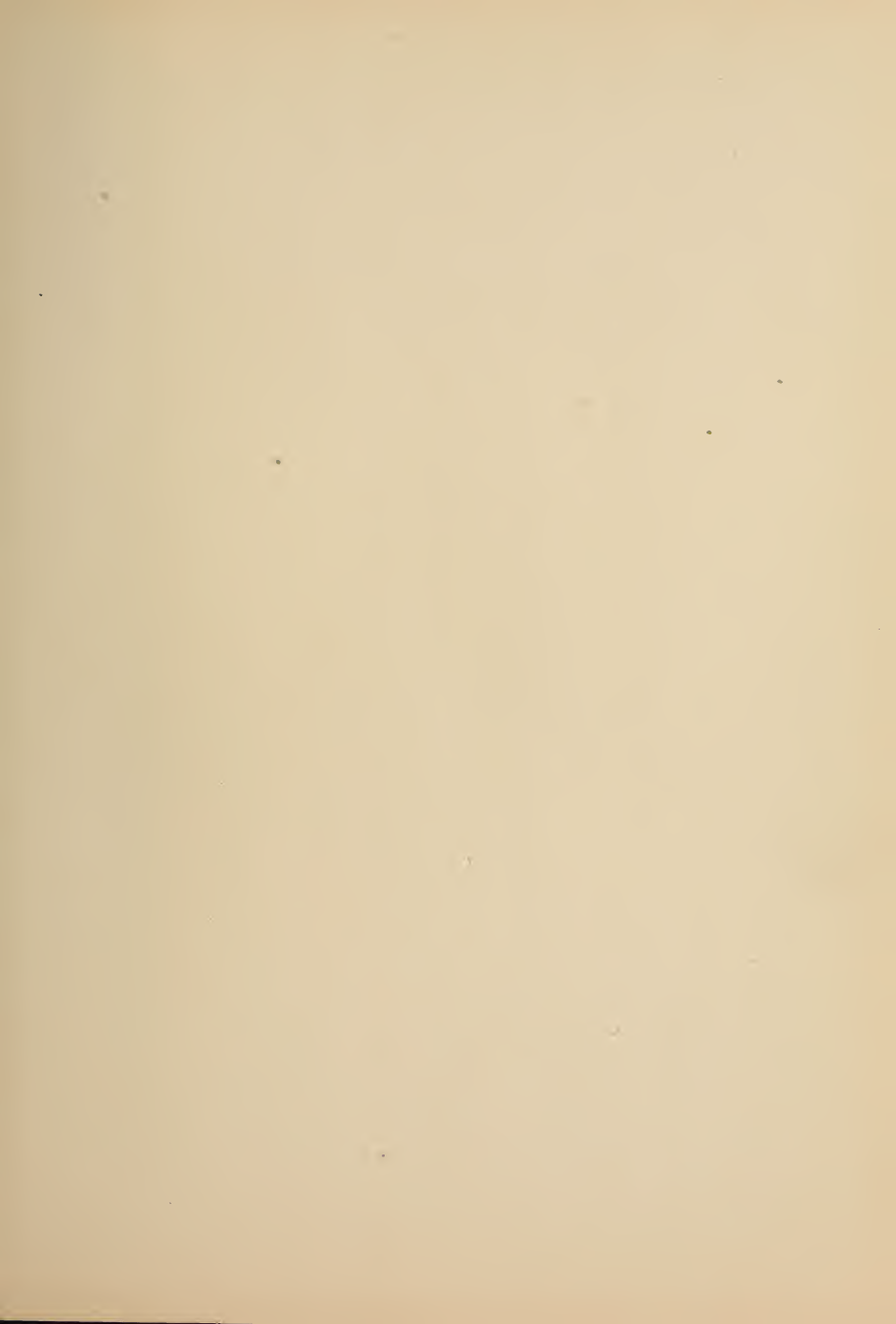
to rise above these vapors of the earth into a clear atmosphere; able to turn to good account all fair and wholesome things beneath the sun and possess themselves in patience and joy; facing the evils of the world with tranquil and manly spirit, striving after well-ordered conduct, yet taking their frugal share of the delightful things of earth. "The moral progress of the race depends on holding with a firm grasp what the Greeks have hardly appreciated. We ought still to emulate their spirit by cheerfully accepting the world as we find it." Is not this in the vein of Christ's parable of the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, and of

his saying, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself"? Few of us live in this spirit. More often

"We with misfortunes 'gainst ourselves
take part,
And our miseries increase by art."

There is alleviation, though not healing, to be derived from Greek serenity and minor philosophies and moralities and the conventional courtesies of society, and a genial and optimistic mental attitude helps us to face the world with fortitude and cheerfulness. But we all know that a stronger foundation than this is needed for abiding happiness, so heavy is the burden

of adversity which human souls are obliged to support. And we must repeat what has already been emphasized, that a life hid with Christ in God, a life of self-forgetful devotion to others, whether the tie that binds us to them be relationship and personal friendship or simply the bond of a common humanity, is alone the happy life.





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